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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR G/DOBRIANSKY, OES/MCMURRAY, OES/GC, OES/ENV;
WHITE HOUSE FOR CEQ/CONNAUGHTON;
TREASURY FOR LESLIE HULL;
DOE FOR OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY, LAU AND PRICE, AND THE
OFFICE OF CLIMATE TECHNOLOGY, ATTN:RMARLAY;
EPA FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/MEDEAIRIS;
USEU FOR ESTH/SMITHAM

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV TSPL EAD PREL FR](#)

SUBJECT: ECOLOGY MINISTER RAISES SUITE OF ENVIRONMENT ISSUES
WITH AMBASSADOR; CLOSER COLLABORATION SOUGHT

1. (U) This is an action message. Please see para 10.

2. (SBU) Summary. On January 25, Ambassador and Minister for Ecology and Sustainable Development Nelly Olin engaged on climate change-related issues, the Global Environmental Facility replenishment talks, the 'World Environmental Organization' concept proposed by President Chirac, and a new international mechanism of scientific expertise on biodiversity (known as 'IMOSEB'), also strongly supported by the GOF. Notwithstanding different views on these subjects, the discussion was positive and Minister Olin welcomed the Ambassador's suggestion that she visit U.S climate, energy, and environmental research facilities, possibly in May 2006. The Minister proposed an exchange of French and U.S. environmental officers to improve understanding of each others' perspectives and environmental systems. End summary.

Climate Change: "Step-by-Step"

3. (SBU) Minister Olin presented French concerns on climate change and, in reference to the Montreal Conference, expressed appreciation for the "U.S.'s last minute helpful gesture that other countries had been waiting and hoping for." She said she had followed "with great interest" the Inaugural Ministerial Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate in January in Sydney. The Ambassador stressed the U.S.'s deep commitment to find technical solutions to meet the climate change challenge; our successes recently in reducing GHG emissions domestically; and the necessary involvement of China and India to develop an effective global response to climate change.

4. (SBU) Olin agreed that "developing countries must include a number of environmental priorities" in their policy. She further commented that she was recently "happily surprised" with the Chinese positioning on ecological issues and that she felt that China was "making progress." She was more reserved about India which she perceives as adopting a wait-and-see attitude on clean development. Olin concluded the climate discussion on a positive note stating that "on this issue we are making progress."

5. (U) In other opening remarks, the Minister spoke highly of U.S. - French collaboration in the Congo Basin Forest Partnership. Viewing this as a successful project, she mentioned that France will now serve as the partnership's head, pursuing policies put in place when the U.S. had led the partnership.

"Grand Souci" GEF-4 Replenishment

6. (SBU) Regarding the ongoing round of Global Environment Facility (GEF) replenishment talks, the Minister prefaced her points saying that this was "a real source of worry" and "This is something for which I need your help." She stressed the importance of the GEF as the key financial mechanism to ensure progress on such issues as climate change, biodiversity, desertification, and chemicals management for the developing world. Olin asked the Ambassador's help "to unblock" the replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund. She said that the U.S. had made a commitment at the Gleneagles G-8 Summit to support the facility. Experts on the Minister's staff stressed the unique nature of the fund, its past successes, and the repercussions were the U.S. contribution to be reduced. Such an action would not only impact the replenishment but would in turn serve as a signal for other contributors to reduce their offers. Embassy ESTH Counselor inquired about France's financial commitment - 164 million

Euros over a four-year period - and indicated that while the Embassy knew that GEF replenishment talks were underway, we were unaware of the details of the U.S. position. The Ambassador agreed to convey to the French U.S. points on the GEF.

A 'World Environmental Organization'?

17. (U) The Minister said it was the wish of President Chirac to transform the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) into something larger, a United Nations Environment Organization (UNEO) perhaps, to strengthen the efficiency and coherence of international environmental governance. She claimed that this desire is now shared by all European countries and that the Austrian EU Presidency plans to soon raise the issue on the United Nations' agenda.

New Biodiversity Mechanism?

18. (U) Olin also confirmed the GOF desire to move forward on the 'IMOSEB' issue. (Note: The concept of an International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity (IMOSEB) was introduced by President Chirac at the International Conference on Biodiversity and Governance held in Paris in January 2005. During that conference, and recalling the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Chirac proposed the creation of a similar mechanism for biodiversity. The conference final statement urged the launch of an international, multi-stakeholder consultative process to assess the need for such a mechanism, and a meeting was held in Paris in June 2005 to initiate the 'next steps' consultative process. End note.) Olin informed the Ambassador that a follow-on IMOSEB meeting would take place in Paris February 21-22, 2006. ESTH Counselor responded that the U.S. favors neither a 'World (nor UN) Environment Organization,' nor perceives the need for an additional mechanism to oversee biodiversity. The U.S. goal is to enhance the performance of existing international/multilateral scientific organizations, mechanisms, and treaties. While stressing that the U.S. is disinclined to concur in a new mechanism for biodiversity, ESTH Counselor indicated that the USG may send an officer from Washington to attend the February meeting. While comprehending the U.S. position, Olin nonetheless hoped that the U.S. would indeed participate in the meeting.

Enhancing Environmental Cooperation

19. (U) Olin told the Ambassador that the Ecology Ministry has begun an exchange program of government officials, notably with other EU countries. She said that her Ministry would welcome a U.S. environmental officer to participate in a secondment. The Ambassador suggested that France might wish to augment its existing technical environmental exchanges with the U.S. That this might include U.S. 'brownfield' sites. The Ambassador invited the Minister to visit U.S. energy laboratories, such as the Department of Energy's Renewable Energy Laboratory and/or the National Center for Atmospheric Research or similar centers. The Minister said she would like to accept the Ambassador's invitation perhaps around a planned visit to New York, May 10-12, her schedule permitting.

110. (U) Action Requested: Washington agencies are requested to provide the following:

-- U.S. points re the GEF replenishment talks to forward to Minister Olin;

-- Reactions to the GOF suggestion regarding secondments of U.S. environmental officers (State OES?, EPA?) for short or long periods at the French Ministry of Ecology;

-- Site visit suggestions for Minister Olin that highlight U.S. climate technology efforts.

111. Comment: Notwithstanding the sensitive topics discussed, we sensed the Minister sought to make the dialogue constructive and positive. Interestingly, not once was the 'Kyoto Protocol' mentioned. The Embassy seeks to continue this dialogue begun between Minister Olin and U/S Dobriansky at the Montreal Climate Conference and we think it would be extremely useful strategically to provide her with points on the U.S. position on the GEF, views regarding a possible secondment of a U.S. officer to the Ministry of Ecology, and suggestions for visits to U.S. environmental, energy efficiency, and climate science sites. End comment.

STAPLETON